

**Questioning Conscience of New Ginowan Mayor**

Tadae Takubo

The choice in the Feb. 12 Ginowan mayoral election came as a lesser evil. I have no choice but to comment that former Okinawa prefectural assembly member and mayor-elect Atsushi Sakima, 47, is better than his opponent, former Ginowan Mayor Yoichi Iha, 60.

**Indifference about Okinawa's role**

On Nov. 10, 2009, I listened to Iha in person in a press conference at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan in Tokyo. He is nothing more than an activist who devoted himself to movements against war, against military bases and against the Japan-U.S. security treaty amid leftists' anti-treaty struggles. He proudly introduced himself as an activist participating in struggles against military bases in South Korea and Guam. On the other hand, Sakima had once conditionally tolerated the proposed relocation of the Futenma U.S. Marine Air Station in Ginowan city to Nago's Henoko in the northern part of Okinawa but has changed his position to call for relocating the base out of Okinawa. Both have failed to recognize Japan's position and Okinawa's role in the international environment.

Asia is the only region in the world, which is seething with the possibility of national sovereignties clashing with each other. In the region, China has risen to the second biggest country after the United States in terms of both military power and gross domestic product and triggered territorial frictions with South Korea, Japan, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and India in a manner to brush off international commonsense. At a time when Japan, among Asian countries sharing liberal and democratic values with the U.S. Obama administration, is required to make a key role, Naha stands in Tokyo's way.

**Is China a relative?**

Since I lived for more than one year in Naha some 42 years ago, I have had a warm feeling for Okinawa. I was moved to tears when reading the last telegram message by Vice Adm. Minoru Ota who killed himself in Oroku, south of Naha, during the Battle of Okinawa in the final days of World War II. "Okinawa Prefecture people have thus fought. I wish for special consideration being given to the Okinawans in the future." I spare no effort to support Okinawa. But I cannot tolerate Okinawa to be indifferent about Japan's national interests. Sadanori Yamanaka, who served as the first director general of the Okinawa Development Agency after Okinawa's reversion to

Japan and made great efforts to develop Okinawa, expressed his anger at various preferential treatments of Okinawa a decade ago. “Special consideration in the future is over. Okinawa should accept this. The time has come for Okinawa to make its efforts.”

The Ryukyu Shimpo newspaper on Feb. 3 carried a Kyodo News story quoting Okinawa business leader Koichiro Kokuba, who serves as chairman of the Okinawa Japan-China Friendship Association, as saying, “China is our relative and Japan is our friend.” How will Japan’s public opinion react? I would like to question the conscience of new Ginowan Mayor Sakima.

*Tadae Takubo is Vice President, Japan Institute for National Fundamentals.*